An October Challenge

Posted originally on the Archive of Our Own at http://archiveofourown.org/works/34741027.

Rating:	Not Rated
Archive Warning:	No Archive Warnings Apply
Fandoms:	Hannibal (TV), Hannibal Lecter Series - All Media Types
Relationship:	Will Graham/Hannibal Lecter
Characters:	Alana, Jack, Freddie Lounds, Bedelia Du Maurier, Abel Gideon, Francis Dolarhyde, Simonetta Sforza-Lecter, Chiyoh
Additional Tags:	October challenge, honestly started this so late, Time Skips, Alternate Universe, hannibal is not human, the food is people, Will is human, Freddie Dies, Mostly from Hannibals perspective, Vauge timeline, Does… does Will Know?, Accidental Courting, Hannibal Lecter Loves Will Graham, Hannibal Lecter is the Chesapeake Ripper, Wendigo Hannibal Lecter, Will Graham Has Encephalitis, it gets cured early on, Misunderstandings, Magic, Language of Flowers, Witch!Bedelia, Dragon!Francis, Mind Palace is a unique Wendigo trait, fantasy creatures are called Non-humans/inhumans
Language:	English
Stats:	Published: 2021-10-26 Updated: 2021-10-28 Words: 15,604 Chapters: 10/31

An October Challenge

by Fandom_Life_Corrupted_Me

Summary

I saw a fic writer take the October prompts and use each one as a chapter in and over all story rather than individual story, which sounded awesome. I am attempting this. It's exceeding late into the game but here goes nothing.

Each chapter will have the prompt as its title.

Chill In The Air

A chill hung in the air despite Hannibal knowing that his house was relatively warm. His thermostat resolutely informed it was a solid 73 degrees. A shiver twisted it's way down his spine as he sat next to the fire he had started in his office. Will had appeared tonight, taken instead by the demands of his job at the FBI. It left Hannibal feeling bereft and alone as he glanced at the empty chair that Will had claimed as his own. He sat, feeling the cold sink through his skin as he waited out the hour before retiring to his house. His kitchen beckoned for him and a deep gnawing hunger demanded his attention. It wasn't an unfamiliar thing, hunger. It had plagued him since he had *become* but he had long since become adept at concealing his status as a member of the non-human community. While not illegal, his status being hidden was more beneficial than not if it came with its own setbacks. Still the entertainment and thrill of success where so many others of his kind had failed filled him with a special sense of pride.

That night as he settled into bed, feeling pleasantly full, something which rarely happens his mind turned to Will once more. Pondering, as he had so many times before, if Will had some fae blood in him. Those piercing blue eyes had an eerie beauty, framed by enchanting curls. As part of a newly established nightly routine Hannibal sketched Will from memory. Pulling quiet moments from his memory palace and letting his hand shade and contour how his images of the lush lines of Wills back arched in pleasure— or pain. Hannibal wasn't entirely sure which. Either way he was sure he would be stunning. Had Hannibal been more aware, as he usually was, he might have realized the path he had began to take.

In the days that followed what had started as a chill had seemed to escalate a relatively new experience for himself. 'Though not entirely without its benefits.' Hannibal decided as he sat across from a concerned looking Will who had paused in his explanation of his latest investigation in favor of examining Hannibal more closely.

"Are you alright?" Will asked. "You look…. Pale." Hannibal gave him an indulgent smile.

"I believe It is the beginning of allergy season." He answered. "No doubt many are suffering from its effects." He said. Will frowned. Given Hannibals… build that odds of him having allergies or even getting sick was unlikely to say the least. Though he never enjoy the changing of winter. The locked doors of his mind palace jingle and the places he couldn't never return to demanded his attention in more intense ways. He steadfastly ignored him.

“Right”. Will said hesitantly.

“You seem unconvinced.” Will let out a sheepish half laugh.

“Sorry. You always seem so… put together. Untouched. For some reason my mind always put in some *other* category. Inhuman.” Will said before tensing. “Sorry— I didn’t mean you weren’t human or—“

“You need never to apologize to me.” Hannibal reassured him, impressed as always with Will's mind and ability to put pieces together even with as limited information as he had. ‘Beautiful.’ He thought, admiring the man before. The stiffness and tense line that had surfaced after his earlier statement had eased. “While many find it unpleasant to be compared to the strange and inhuman beings that dwell and live alongside us, I find myself not among them.”

“People must think you're weird.”

“It’s fine to be weird.” Hannibal reassured him.

“Only if your boss doesn’t mind.”

“Jack is not disturbed by any concern of your weirdness. Only your ability to crawl out of a dark place. He sees you not as weird, but as fine china for special guests.” Will paused in thought, tilting his head and looking at Hannibal as though he was looking at him— through him. The pervading chill in the air clung tighter to his skin.

“How do you see me?”

“The mongoose I want under the house when the snake slithers by.”

Corn Maze

Chapter Notes

See the end of the chapter for notes

Hannibal found himself standing at the edge of an eroding bluff. The Odyssey came to mind as he looked on at the wine-dark sea even as he instinctively knew this was not the same seas Odysseus traversed in his travels. The scent of brine filled the air and he breathed in deeply inhaling the smells of the ocean as thunder rolled overhead and the water below frothed and churned with vicious delight. There he stood, at the precipice of change and power incarnate looking down as he imagined god might look down. Powerful and distant.

Hannibal woke from his dream with the memory of sea salt still fresh in his mind. As he dressed for the day he settled on having fish for dinner, inspired by the dream he had. The mental image of rolling waves and eroding bluff stayed with him for the remainder of the day, giving him a pleasant distraction from his less intriguing clients. In fact, it was during Franklin's session that his mind pondered the question of possibly seeking out a place such as the one in his dreams. While Franklin sobbed about his Micheal Jackson woes Hannibalcrafted a list of possible spots he might begin searching for such a scenic place. It was an unlikely thing, yet the beauty of the scene lingered fresh in his mind late into the evening.

“I used to dream that my house was a boat out at sea. Safe from the horrors that lingered on land. Sometimes during the evenings I would walk with the dogs and when I would turn back to look, the windows shone like a lighthouse in the dark. For a long time it was the only time I could ever feel safe.” Will admitted as he reclined back into his leather chair. Will was not a formally patient, the FBI only having required one session, yet Will had returned and Hannibal had found himself too fascinated to charge the boy. His words and mind were payment enough. So that sat, lit by the fireplace the Hannibal had lit to combat the dropping temperatures of October.

“What do you dream of now?” Hannibal asked.

“I dream of connecting. Sometimes I’m searching the field of my house for something just out of reach— just waiting for me to reach back and touch it.” He admitted softly.

“Connecting with the unknown is not an uncommon dream.”

“I’m not entirely sure it’s mine anyway.” Will said tiredly. “There's a case.” Hannibal waited, knowing Will would continue when he felt ready. “A man was killed at the opera house. Part of the regular orchestra employees there. Whoever killed him is looking to do something. Or someone. Jack thinks the killer is human.”

“And you don’t?”

“No.”

“Tell me, when you envision this killer what do you see them as?”

“A dark thing, mangled and lonely.” He admitted. “It’s not a good dream.”

“Not forts in the bone arena for the things you love.” Hannibal said simply and Will nodded.

“What do you dream of?” Will asked curious. Hannibal tilted his head thoughtfully.

“I rarely dream.” He answered truthfully. His kind needed fewer hours of sleep than a human but often slumbering much deeper than humans. It didn’t allow for dreams often. “However recently I dream I stood at the precipice of an eroding bluff. Standing looking down at the sea in the odyssey. Beautiful and savage in equal parts.” He hummed thoughtfully. “It was once thought dreams held the key to unlocking the mind, a place of reflection of our inner psyche and the woes of our unconscious.”

“If dreams are key to our mind, wonder what yours says about you.” Will teased and Hannibal inclined his head. “Still… it sounds lovely.”

“It was. The sea is powerful and severe.”

“Before,” Will began, “I used to work on boat motors with my father. Take apart and put an engine back together again. There was a time I had the chance to test out one of the nicer motors in the name of product testing. Really it was just to have fun. It was fast though. Skimmed over the waves and sent salt water into the air until I felt like I would forget what regular air felt like. It was one of the few good memories I had of my teen years.” He admitted. Hannibal relishes the few stories Will shared with his youth, as few and far between as they were which was why now that Will had brought it up he decided to seize the opportunity presented to him.

“All good things which come from the sea must return to it.” He said carefully hoping it would print another story from Will. It did.

“Not every good memory is from the sea.” Will said softly, oozing comfort in the light of the fire. Relaxed as he sat embraced by the cozy and welcome atmosphere Hannibal had crafted for him. “There was one when I was younger. During one of dad's searches for work. We had made a stop in Kansas. Halloween was close but we couldn’t afford much, and on the side of one of those long country roads was a sign to a corn maze. Cheap entertainment.” Will explain, his eyes glazing over as the memory visibly swept across his facial features. They spent the rest of the session quietly relishing each other's company as the Autumn night grew darker and darker outside the tall windows. Hannibal let his own mind wander and imagine Will as a boy. Then and slender- a willow of a child whose thick curls and all too seeing eyes surrounded by the golds and reds of the corn fields.

When Hannibal went to bed he was surprised to find himself dreaming again. This time however the sea and the bluff were replaced instead by towering stalks of corn twisting themselves around him. The sky above him was a violent red color and sending shadows fleeing across the ground, soon to be devoured by the dark entirely. With each step he took in the seemingly endless maze of corn the path before him would morph and change. Before any feelings of frustration could develop, Will appeared. Standing in the center of his path, entirely unexpected.

“What a cunning boy you are.” Hannibal murmured as he looked on at how sure of himself Will was in this dream. Content to be in the midst of a labyrinthine and appearing near divine with the dying suns reds backlighting him. Hannibal could only stand in Will shadow and marvel.

He thought at once of the Minotaur in the labyrinth. To many he appeared a monster but the Minotaur could only follow its own nature and was beyond the gods powers. For that reason it was banished. Exiled. Locked away to guard the labyrinth. Hannibal paused wondering if he was the minotaur, hunting WIll or if the clever profiler was in fact the minotaur sent to taunt him in this world- in many ways a maze in its own right.

When Hannibal awoke, the logical half pushed itself to the front. Never in his existence had he dream twice in a row before. It was a new and odd discovery which also marked a rise in a lack of restful sleep that dragged at him in ways he had least expected it.

“You need sleep.” Will pointed out at their next appointment a rather big role reversal. Distantly Hannibal wondered when he would cease to be surprised by the young man.

“I assure I am sleeping an adequate amount.”

“I can see shadows under your eyes.” Hannibal blinked. That was a new development as well. “It is the stress of the renovation of my summer home.” He said quietly, an entire lie. There was of course a renovation occuring in one of the homes he owned. It was not a summer home, nor was it stressful in the least. He highly doubted a simple reflooring would ever affect his sleep. Will sucked in a breath, his hand going to his neck before tilting his head back thoughtfully. Hannibal's attention was immediately redirected. The sight of Will laid vulnerable before sent an instinctual thrill up his spine. A throat laid bare was trust that another would not reach out to bite it. Hannibal pushed that response down. Will was unaware of his inhuman statues and humans were largely ignorant to the nuance of such an action and what it inspired in the nonhuman community. “Come to a corn maze with me.” Will blurted out and Hannibal blinked not expecting that. “I uh, need to use one for an investigation I’m working on. I uh— feel weird going by myself. Sorry.” Will added sheepishly. Hannibal smiled.

“Never apologize for coming to me.”

Altogether it was a pleasant trip. The smog of the city was mostly gone from the air and Hannibal's nose slipped into overtime as it filtered through all the things it could detect without the thick layer scent of smog and smoke and ash which tended to blanket everything. Will was tense at first, all too aware as he stepped out to see numbers of children and their parents, that he belonged to neither catagory. They walked through the maze, Will helping the braver of the children read the little map given at the start of the maze. He let his hand trail along the side following to the left. Hannibal stayed silent letting Will be as he guided them through the harvest despite the late hour. He wondered if this was how Eurydice felt as she followed her husband out of the underworld, staring at the back of her beloved carrying with her the fear of what would happen should he look back. The notion slowed his feet somewhat, catching Wills attention.

“Sorry,” he said sheepishly. “I know this place is more geared to non-humans at night. I’ll have us out sooner rather than later.” Hannibal kept his mouth shut, merely nodding as again imagining the heartbreak Eurydice must have felt when Orpheus turned and she met his eyes- sentencing her back to the depths of the underworld.

Chapter End Notes

Inhumans (also called nonhumans) exist in this universe. They can range from vampires, to werewolves to anything in between. Generally a person has to be bore an Inhuman and only under very specific circumstances can a human be turned.

Inhumans are generally loners, and are looked down upon on in society as criminals and monsters. (They usually are to be honest)

Long Night

Despite their trip to the corn maze Hannibal's peculiar pattern of dreaming had continued. Even after he indulged in another hunt despite not technically needing another meal for a while. His belly was fuel of the flesh of a rather rude insurance man yet he still felt empty. Hungry. Wanting more. It was a new experience even as the dreams continued. A restless energy began to creep into his day to day life. Something some were beginning to notice.

“You seem… different recently.” Alana had said one evening from where she was seated at his dining table. The usual satisfaction he derived from people consuming human flesh unknowingly dwindled as the restlessness rose and his sleep grew more…. Unsettled.

“Different is good.” Hannibal replied, more diplomatically than anything else. She nodded slowly.

“It can be.” She agreed, taking a sip from her wine glass. Dinner continued normally, or close to normal anyway. Hannibal explained the food, the origin of it and the myths surrounding its home culture. As the main course drew to a close he had successfully diverted Alana's attention, and dessert led to a fascinating conversation about Margot, one of Alana’s new patients and something of a personal struggle for the kind but somewhat judgemental woman.

“Self medicating doctor?” Hannibal asked, eyeing her as she took a big swig from her wine glass. She smirked.

“Nothing wrong with a little self medication.” She replied. “Besides. I need it. I know my limits but Mason pushes on boundaries I didn’t know I had.” She presses her lips together, as if the mere mention of his name caused her anger. “I’m not normally one to advocate for violence nor am I against the non-human community but there has to be something that can be done about him. He is cruel for cruelty’s sake. He takes his own status an a non-human too far and uses it as an excuse to harm others.” She huffed.

“Not all non-humans are inherently bad, just as not all humans are inherently good.” Hannibal said. “But if you feel something should be done perhaps there is some action that

can be taken? Has he broken the law?" He questioned. "I can mention it to Will if need be. He'll be over for dinner later this week."

"Isnt that be a confusion of boundaries? He's your patient."

"Will is not my patient." Hannibal corrected and Alana set her glass down with a thunk.

"He has an appointment time."

"I keep that time slot open for him as a friend. He does not employ me."

"You cleared him for the FBI." She pushed, her eyes narrowing as her high and mighty narrow minded brain clicked into a higher gear. "I would say that constitutes being a patient."

"You are correct. I cleared him for the FBI. It was once and there was never any arrangement made past that initial meeting and screening."

"So what do you call your time with him?"

"Friendly conversations." Hannibal replied calmly.

"A friend who comes to see you so often you have a time slot for them. Who joins you for dinner." She pointed out and Hannibal stiffened.

"What exactly are you implying, Alana."

"I'm not implying anything. I'm stating facts."

“You believe I am too close to him? That I can’t have a friendship with him because of a consulting job where my only role was to declare him of sound mind or not.”

“Yes.”

“Contrary to what you believe Dr.Bloom,” Hannibal began carefully looking at her as she sat at his table and ate his food while sitting there insulting his judgement and Will. “The only conflict of interest I see here has been your own. It is clear you have some form of feelings for your new patient Margot. Frustrations you are projecting onto me because we're unable to him Will.” He tilted his head. “You tied yourself into such notes you didn’t allow yourself to be in the safe room as him. Couldn’t decide if you wanted him or his mind so you settled for neither.” She gasped, staring at him. Hannibal disregarded it. Will and I have conversations because we enjoy each other’s company and because I enjoy supporting his well being. I am not his doctor because I chose him over his mind. I decided to explore where it takes me. Perhaps you should do the same.” The dark haired woman stood abruptly, chair scraping against the floor sending Hannibal's mind back to the recipe box resting in his kitchen as he considered what he might pluck from it.

“This is a breach of ethics.” She stated flatly. Hannibal blink.

“Alana. I care about you, but I do not care for you in the same way.” He said carefully. He had known of her desire for him for a long time, had in fact nursed it at times as a means to an end. Shocked and wounded pride marred his otherwise pretty face.

“Rude.” She said finally. “Shockingly rude.” And then she left as she came. Angry and seeking comfort in the arms of a friend somewhere. Afterwards, when he had time to gather himself and his thoughts— dishes drying and table cleared and took a long hot bath, and agreed. ‘While perfectly justified, my words were rude.” He said quietly. It would not help him later should Alana turn against him. Reputation is a powerful thing. He breathed out and resolved to send a case of the beer was brewed for her. A compromise of sorts. Beer brewed in a wine barrel. He had been saving it for something special. This would have suffice.

****

That night Hannibal dreamt he was back in the forest of his childhood home. Ancient trees with gnarled roots reaching down and down into the ground. ‘Everyone wants to put down roots at some point. Start a family.’ He thought, recalling a distant faded memory of his dame he didn’t know he still had. He woke with a buzz of energy under his skin and an impulsive streak unusually high. He wasn’t quite sure what he wanted to do but he knew it wouldn’t get done lying there in bed. He made his way around the corner past the samurai armor that sat posed perfectly to the kitchen. His safe haven. His domain. A place perfectly his. He had eaten recently. Was full, and yet something nagged at him.

“Perhaps a dinner party.” He mused eyes focused on the Rolodex of business cards resting on the kitchen counter as though insisting he take a peak. He took a breath and then steadfastly turned and went back up stairs. ‘Reckless.’ He decided, choosing instead to wait until later in the morning to make any decisions. The thought of a stampede of strangers invading his dining room is unusually upsetting at the moment.

****

The day dragged on slowly. Each patient is tiring in their own way. There was 8 o’clock, whose behavioral issues had resulted in yet another failure in a relationship which sent them spiraling into a depressive episode. Tedious. 9 o'clock was fairly straightforward, simply hallucinations. Franklin was there of course. Hannibal spent that session deciding the best way to kill him. Franklin was pleasantly plump but much of the weight on him was fat. Hannibal preferred lean meat. Better flavor and texture. ‘There would always be plenty of sausage.’ He thought, eyeing Franklin's oversized gut. Each tick brought a tock, inching him closer and closer to Will's appointed time. 6 o’clock left in a rush.

Will stood outside the door back straight, eyes gazing into some distant unknown thing. Stunning.

“Will.” Hannibal murmured. “Please come in.” Will smiled. Time blurred together. Mundane days made better as the verbal dances he waltzed with Will continued. Still Hannibal was as he always has been— hungry.

“I kissed Alana Bloom.” Will announced as he stormed into Hannibal's kitchen. He stiffened from where he was making coffee. Carefully drawing upon his control and experience Hannibal avoided breaking the mug he was holding at those words. He passed it over to Will.

“Why do so now?” He asked, watching him carefully.

“I have wanted to kiss her since I met her. She’s very kissable.”

“You waited a long time, that suggests a reason. I’m curious then why you drove an hour to tell me about this.”

“I—“ Will went silent. “I was…. Lonely.” He admitted. “Alana was there. She showed up to check on me. Sas complaining about… something. You, I think.” Will frowned. “About us actually.” Blue eyes met his own with sharp focus. “Why was Alana complaining about our relationship?”

“Alana is a good psychiatrist. Careful of rules and morals.” Hannibal explained simply. “No room in her mind for things outside of her own moral compass.” Wills frown deepened.

“So Alana is upset that we are friends because what, you were my therapist once upon a time?” Hannibal inclined his head. “You're not my psychiatrist.” Will pointed out. We’re simply having conversations.”

“I know.” Hannibal agreed. “Nonetheless she will take whatever action she seems necessary.”

“What does that mean for you?” Will asked, leaning forward across the counter.

“Nothing.” Hannibal assured him. “Drink your coffee.”

“It’s not the only reason I’m here.” Will huffed. “Abel Gideon has escaped.”

“Any leads?”

“Too many. He seems to be tracking down former psychiatrists, people who talked to him. He’s under the twisted impression that if he meets the Ripper he’ll be able to gauge who he is. And who he isn’t.”

“How unfortunate for Gideon.” Hannibal said simply, mind already planning, as his stomach grumbled at the prospect of fresh meat. Will scoffed.

“Gideon already took pieces out of Chilton. Fumbling around his guts like he fumbled around his head.” Will's face twisted and Hannibal drank in the violence displayed there. “Serves him right.”

****

Hannibal sat in the office enjoying the wine. Curious and waiting to see what might happen next. Gideon did not disappoint. He entered the office, gun drawn and looking as confused as Will said he would be.

“Hello.” Hannibal said, taking a sip watching the man creep warily inside. “Are you Abel Gideon?”

“I am, and you're Hannibal Lecter.”

“You made quite a mess of Frederick Chilton.”

“I’m just returning the favor.” Gideon said with a huff. Hannibal reclined, eyeing Gideon and thinking back to Wills and Alana.

“Alana Bloom was one of your psychiatrists yes?” Gideon tilted his head.

“Dr.Bloom yes.”

“I can tell you where to find her.” Hannibal said carefully, curious what havoc he would wreck upon the woman. She had meddled in something she shouldn’t have— taken something which wasn’t her to take.

Abel left quietly and Hannibal spent a few hours waiting. When he next checked his watch, he saw the numbers 2:47a.m cheer back at him. He stood, washing his wine glass and made his way to his room where he promptly stripped, and put his clothes in the hamper. He let his eyes fall closed, tilted his head back as he allowed his second skin to slip free. Bones extending, fingers twisting to claws and shadows becoming flesh. An old tunnel run under the length of Baltimore, something Hannibal was careful to tap into and erase from the wider memory of Baltimore. It became the highway for his activities, and he escaped Baltimore unseen. His thin bony form weaves through tree and roads alike to find Gideon exactly where Hannibal had predicted he would be.

Alana's home was a broken thing now. Shattered windows and the odd flickering light. He observed the destruction he had sent with a distant and vague sense of satisfaction before turning his head back to the scents which filled the air. The smell of blood hung heavy and he took a moment to enjoy it. Alana had managed to wound Gideon. ‘Good for her.’ He thought as he made quick work of tracking Gideon down.

It was then he learned of Will's involvement. Gideon was seated in the front seat of a van and Will passed out in the back, blood racing down the side of his face. ‘Head wound.’ Hannibal realized already mentally adjusting his plans. With his towering form, he clawed the van door open and silenced Gideon. He couldn’t help Will like this— not without risking himself. He drove until he found a well lit gas station and then dumped Will there. A sleight of the hand and an additional meal added to the van Gideon had acquired and Paramedics weren in route to Wills to location.

The rest of the evening was less than ideal. The quick butchering of a hapless bystander, a casualty which ensures Will's survival, filled most of a freezer. Abel was dose with heavy medication and detained in a small nook deep in the tunnels Hannibal traversed. He returned, and was able to catch the shrill ringtone belonging to Jack . Human veil put back into place, Hannibal drove to the hospital where he sat next to Wills bedside waiting for the night to pass.

“Hey.” Will said clearly as he awoke to find Hannibal still resting beside him. “What happens where’s—“

“Rest Will. It’s been a long night.”

Haunting

Will felt drained. Time had ceased to have meaning as he lay in the hospital bed. The constant stream of doctors choosing to poke and prod at him sent a fresh wave of *pissed off* and *pain* through him every time. Memories held the quality of dream, dark and disorienting. He remembers trying to help her— to save her. ‘Alana's screams had filled the air until his ears were ringing— Or maybe that was the gunshots. There was blood and-‘ Will jerk as the prick of a needle yanked him out of his head with all the grace of a man being waterboarded.

For the first time since Will had been admitted Hannibal wasn’t there when he woke up. He wasn’t sure how he felt about that. The polite man had stayed near, a constant haunting shadow which had carefully blocked Jack's every attempt at contact and put the fear of god into the nurses who simply wanted to do their jobs. Will didn’t mind though, not really. It was nice. Will didn’t mention the fact that his room was really much nicer than it should have been and Hannibal brought him pictures of his dogs. When the doctor came back to about to release him, it was Hannibal who urged for him to stay. Something which turned out to be a good thing when they caught the fact that his brain was basically on fire. Will spent the next couple weeks in and out of an induced Coma. Now Will was awake, breaking free from the Coma and Hannibal wasn’t there. A nurse walked in and smiled at him. Will didn’t bother to smile back.

“Where’s Hannibal?”

“Your boyfriend stepped out to clean up. Long stays at hospitals are hardly fun for anyone.” She explained, before checking the machines for his vitals. “Still you're looking a lot better. No seizures or any inflammation. With any luck you'll be able to head home tonight.” Hannibal chose that moment to walk back in and she threw him a couple smiles. “Of course no strenuous physical activity for another couple weeks.” Will's eye went wide as he caught the implication. Hannibal for his part, didn’t even bat an eye. When the nurse left Will saw his chance and took it.

“Hannibal. What happened? How long have I been out for?”

“Will, you've been asleep four a couple of weeks now.”

“I— why?”

“Encephalitis.” He replied calmly. “You had an infection, an inflammation of the brain. Fortunately they were able to catch it early before any of the symptoms could manifest. However it did make treating the head injury you obtained that much harder to treat.”

“Gideon.” Will blurted out. “Where is he? Did they catch him—“

“Gideon’s whereabouts are unknown. You are currently the last individual to have seen him.” Hannibal answered carefully.” He glanced at the door. “An event Jack is keen to hear more of.”

“I bet.” Will muttered, sinking back into the hospital bed. “Give a dog a bone and all that.” He said with a wave of his hands. Hannibal inclined his head.

“Indeed. This requires a psychiatric evaluation be done prior to any statements however given your recent medical condition.”

Will sighed. “So… when do we start?”

“Pardon?”

“Ya know…when do uh…” Will trailed off as he saw a stony look return to Hannibal's eyes.

“You won’t be having the session with me.” Hannibal gathered his things and stood. The presence which haunted his near every waking moment had seen fit to leave. It burned at his chest and clawed at the throat and all at once he went back to his child. Boatyard and dad and the constant stream of leaving behind and being left behind that colored every moment of his youth.

“Don’t go.” Will breathed and Hannibal paused before turning back to look at him, the only clue that told Will that he had in fact spoken aloud. He swallowed. “Stay.”

“Will…”

“No. Stay with me.” Will demanded. Hannibal gave him a soft look— not a smile per say but something better. More encompassing and promising. It shadows his eyes colors his cheeked and Hannibal tilted his head to the side before saying,

“Where else would I go?”

****

Hannibal for his part did not regret the hours spent at Will's bedside. Each caught lucid moment brought with it more moments to see Will in new and equally Intriguing ways. He was surprised to find how disturbing it was to see Will without his full mental capabilities, however. Helplessness on Will Graham was an ill fitting suit which tugged mercilessly at Hannibal's instincts in an unfamiliar way. It was…enthralling. It had been decades since another entity, human or otherwise inspired such possessive and protecting feelings in him. So he stayed, and ensured Wills well being. Pushed for a better room— a private room. Pulled a few strings with a colleague and prevents Jack bulldozing his way through Will's health for something as pathetic as Abel Gideon. When it became apartment Jack was more foolhardy than even Hannibal had expected, he alerted his superiors to a somewhat damning narration of events. Not even Jack with his bending of rules would ignore them in their entirety. Then Will was awake, truly awake. There was a thrill to be had in having your name be the first word spoken by someone you value, which Hannibal is only recently coming to understand. A thrill which was shortly put to halt later. Four words.

When do we start

‘Will had asked that whilst still recovering.’ Hannibal had reasoned, knowing not to take it for the insult it had at first seemed to be. Still the words had wounded deeply. The implication is damning. ‘Does Will truely not see us as friends?’ Hannibal pondered, looking down into his glass. He had left again after Will had fallen back asleep. There were still many things to do, and Hannibal had a house guest to attend to. The sound of a fork being flung to the

ground with the grace of a toddler had Hannibal turning his attention back to said house guest. Abel Gideon was perched legless on the edge of Hannibal's dining chair. The meal which Hannibal had graciously decided to share sat ignored and untouched.

“A feast.” He stated bluntly. “A feast where my legs are the main course.” Gideon looked up at Hannibal with full resignation in your eyes. “An inhuman meal for an inhuman thing.”

“There’s no need to be rude, Dr.Gideon. You certainly won’t be using them and I would never let a guest starve.”

“Call me Abel. We moved past the title when you had your teeth at my thigh.”

“Crude.”

“You only wish you had your teeth at Will Graham’s thighs.” Hannibal's attention sharpened, focusing on Abel.

“It’s rude to insult the host.”

“Cannibalism is inherently rude.”

“It’s only cannibalism if the two participants are of equal standing.”

“And we’re not?”

“No.” Hannibal said simply, taking a bite of the perfectly roasted leg, observing Abels distraught reaction.

“But Will Graham is?” He pressed. “Why do you think that is?” The human hummed, and pushed the plate away. “I know what it is, it's those perfect *baby blues* .” Abel let out a vicious smile. “You know he’s *human* don’t you? No about of human meat or perfectly perfected manners are going to woo that twitchy little man. You’d be better off jacking off to a cute rubber doll. Say, what kind of beast are you anyway? Even if you gave him a precious gift would he even recognize it?” Abel huffed under the piercing state of Hannibal. “You know, with my last leg served on the table next to me I should still be wrestling with the urge to fight or flight.”

“It’s called Terminal Restless syndrome. Your body feels compelled to *go go go* .”

“I’ve already *gone* .” Abel sneered. “This is simply posthumous.”

“You're not dead yet. You still have to eat.”

“No. I don’t. At this point there’s nothing I *have* to do.” He let out a resigned sigh as he leaned back in his chair. “But I shouldn’t spoil the fairytale should I?”

“Let it be a fairytale then.” Hannibal agreed to enjoy his meal and the knowledge that Will Graham was safe. For now.

“Where do we start?” Abel asked, already deciding that if there was an afterlife, he could be a ghost somehow— he’s be the best one he could be and haunt the ever living fuck out of Hannibal Lecter.

“ **Once upon a time.** ”

Howl At The Moon

Among the classic Disney fairy tales there remains three crucial parts: the Princess in need of rescuing, the big bad monster to defeat, and the dashing prince to save the day. Needless to say Hannibal rarely enjoyed the classic Disney fairytales. No he much preferred their Grimm origins. The rapunzel who blinded her prince. The 12 princesses whose feet bled as the danced. Cinderella stepsisters who had carved off their heels and toes to be a match— all in vain. What fun then, to discover the latest prey of the FBI was someone who sought to wreak havoc in a very Disney manner.

“Jack wants me to look at the file.” Will said from where he was sitting on his porch. The dogs racing and darting about. Hannibal had long since bribed himself into their good graces — something Will had graciously (if not amused about the entire thing) allowed.

“Will you?”

“My psychiatrist recommends it. Says that it would be therapeutic.” Will said blandly and Hannibal resolved to add this particular psychiatrist to his list of would be snacks. “Jack caught me in the corner I’d my class the other day. Barely back at work and already back to being treated as a tool.” Will sighed. “Should I though?”

“When it comes to how far Jack is willing to push, he is certainly no saint.” Hannibal said instead of agreeing.

“That’s not an answer, you know it.”

“Isn’t it?”

“No. Not really.” Will said flatly.

“I’m your friend. Not your psychiatrists.”

“Friends give advice too. Should I do it? I would be saving lives.” Will asked again, insistent for Hannibal's perspective.

“I hadn’t wished to… blur any lines without your consent.”

“Well thanks. But tell me anyway.” Will stated bluntly and Hannibal took a moment to gather his words. To weigh them before casting them out into the world.

“What about your life?” He asked and Will blinked. “I’m your friend. I don’t care about the lives you saved, I care about your life.” The weight of truth and honesty slipped from Hannibal's fingers intent upon making themselves known.

“Thank you.” Will said somewhat numbly, as though stunned that another person was capable of feeling that for him. A gust of cold wind swept through the field in front of Wills house. “Do you want to go inside, I think I have some hot cocoa.” He added, standing hesitantly. While not thrilled with the prospect of instant hot cocoa, Hannibal would not turn down another opportunity to see Will's sanctuary laid open for him. That is what Will's house was, his sanctuary. A boat at sea free from the madness of daily life. The dogs stayed outside, making the space inside seem that much quieter— emptier. An out of tune piano lay pushed against the wall. As the two fell a peaceful silence broken only by the barking and cheerful sounds of the dogs outside Hannibal looked at the mug in his hand. ‘How far I’ve come.’ He thought quietly.

“I should apologize.” Will stated, interrupting both Hannibal's thoughts, and the quiet which had settled over them. “Back in the hospital, I was rude.”

“Think nothing of it.” Hannibal answered simply. Will paused tilting his head to the side.

“Earlier I didn’t say the whole truth.”

“Oh?”

“No.” Will shook his head. “Jack didn’t ask me to consult on the Disney Killer. He asked me to go over the Chesapeake Rippers profile. I said no so he shoved this into my face.” Will's face scrunched up. “I’m his words I *should do something to be useful or be prepared to be tossed aside* . And no, I didn’t tell that to my psychiatrist.”

“Jack said that to you?” Hannibal asked curious at the sudden lengths Jack was willing to employ to keep his favored bloodhound. “You can report him to HR.”

“Oh what fun that would be. *Hi HR yeah my boss is threatening to fire me if I don’t do my job* .”

“That is not what happened.”

“Not so many words I guess.” Will shrugged. Hannibal considered this new price of information which prodded and pleaded for attention.

“Tell me, if you knew of this why did you ask me for advice?”

“I… wanted to hear your voice. Your…. Thoughts.” Will said slowly. “You seldom voice the truth to those around you. You dance behind layers and girls. It’s impressive really.”

“You wanted to know me.”

“To See you.” Will be corrected softly. Hannibal cast the man a sly smile.

“A rare gift indeed.”

“I want it.” Will replied automatically, shifting in his seat to better lock eyes with Hannibal.

“Blunt.” Hannibal chided, taking a sip from his mug as he considered this new development. ‘Will is a cunning boy, how much more so will he be without the fire and sickness distracting that wicked mind of his?’

“Sorry. I’m being rude again.”

“I forgive you.” Hannibal replied easily and without hesitation, as though there was simply no other thing to do.

Later that night as Hannibal returned to Baltimore, the sound of one Wills dogs howling at the moon pierced the air— shrill and loud. ‘Would you forgive me?’ Hannibal had wanted to ask, as he considered his own inhuman status.

It was not an exaggeration to say that while humans and inhuman functioned together well on paper they would kill each the first chance they got. The old fashioned stories idolizing teenage romance between the two kinds of people had very quickly been banned. Rare was it for an inhuman to hold a job or a place within society of and respect or renown. Impulsive, dangerous, cruel, crazy, incapable of love. These were the words most often used to describe inhumans.

In an attempt the free himself from such dark thoughts,Hannibal instead chose to take what had inspired him and reflect that art into the world behind him. It had been far too long since his last sounder after all. perhaps it was time. Fortunately for Hannibal he knew exactly whom to target.

Sweater Weather

Chapter Notes

See the end of the chapter for notes

Hannibal was not the detective that Will was, but he understood how to kill and keep hidden. In many ways Will was part of the same coin, simply the other side. Working backwards in time rather than forward. Hannibal would be lying if he said it was an unattractive quality. Regardless, the rather specialized skill set which Hannibal had cultivated allowed him to blend and search places the police and FBI had not considered or could not reach. Hannibal intended on making a present of the Disney Killer for Will. It made for long nights with few hours of sleep, and the constant ache in his belly grumbled as such tedious work with such little work. His instincts more raw now, than they had been previously. A side effect of Will Graham Hannibal was sure, though he had yet to ascertain how Will incited such reactions in him.

So it was that late each evening Hannibal slipped through the long forgotten tunnels running under Baltimore, hungry and hunting for his prize. The dead end which he had prepared and renovated as a prison of sorts for Gideon was instead being used as a waypoint. Stashing things he would use or need there for his design as he hunted his prey. Prey who was in fact disappointedly easy to find.

The care, attention to detail, the long hours of time and energy expended on the masterpiece was the next step in Hannibal’s ever evolving plan. In this, Hannibal's inhuman sense of taste aided him, as it allowed him to taste the individual flavors of water. He tasted check and traveled. Carefully curating the water and the bacteria culture in the water as he fed the plants he intended to grow. Snaking the growing sprouts through the veins as he drained the human blood through his arteries. A delicate process. Stolen flowers were arranged and tucked into the gaps and crevasse’s left behind when Hannibal had taken the man's organs. Each flower was placed and moved and replaced again and again until Hannbal felt satisfied. His veil of humanity was absent as he worked, careful of his claws against the delicate petals of the flowers.

“You charm, my Sweet William.” Hannibal murmured, as he finally decided on the placement for the Iris, Sweet Williams and Hyacinthe. From there it was a race against time. The careful balance between it being seen and allows enough time to pass for him to establish an alibi.

****

Jack was still upset with Hannibal about Will's stay in the hospital and how thoroughly he had been blocked. Hannibal wasn't phased about, however it did mean a delay in news about a crime. Instead chose to wait until Will came to him. Something that wasn't difficult given the tense relationship between Will and Freddie. Something Hannibal hadn't know.

"Freddie Lounds is like a soldier that arrives after a battle, to bayonet the wounded." Will spit out as he paced the length of Hannibal's office.

"You believe you are wounded?"

"I believe that the Chesapeake Ripper just painted a neon sign with blood pointing directly at me for all the world to see." He scoffed. "I'd hardly call that coming away unmarked."

"The Ripper is after you?" Hannibal prodded, all too curious how Will had received his message. Eager to know what he saw was beyond the boundaries of a civilized conversation and society.

"Jack thinks he is."

"You dont?"

"No." Will answered with a swallow. "I think the Ripper is courting me." The words halted the gears in Hannibal's brain for a moment. Soaking the human veil he wore and saturating his second skin. As usual the insights Will could glean from things ran deeper than flesh and Hannibal felt flayed open and exposed as he realized that was exactly what he had done. It hadn't been his original intention. He only wanted the Disney killer gone, so Will could do as he wished free from the damaging influence of Jack Crawford. Yet the message had evolved, as things sometimes do. He wanted to remind Will that he was to be admired and that he was as charming as he was.

“How did it feel, to stand there and see such an overt gesture being made to you by a killer?” Hannibal asked, throat dry.

“I should have felt upset or scared. Instead all i felt was… a calm quiet sense of… power.” Will admitted in a whisper, as though speaking any louder would magically summon Jack and Co. to take him away.

“Because you caught his attention?”

“Because I control his attention.” Will stated, turning to focus his eyes on Hannibal. “Whatever message the Ripper had intended to write, evolved. I didn't get the feeling it was done consciously. Our killer is fascinated by me, admires me.” Will began to explain. “Iris flowers could have been placed to compliment the bark of the tree, but Iris in the language of flowers mean *I’m sending a message* or *I have a message* . Sweet Williams are double edged, meaning *admiration, passion* and were once considered the flowers of the gods. To say nothing of the more obvious reference. Finally, Hyacinthe. *Your loveliness charms me* . The Ripper just announced to the world, *I have a message to Will Graham. I admire you and your passion. your loveliness has charmed me* .” Will huffed. “He might as well have painted a target on my back. Freddie sure as hell took advantage once she got the chance to take photos.”

“Someone took your photograph?”

“Freddie is hardly what I would deem worthy of being someone.” Will snapped. “She’s a cockroach. Hardly human in the slightest.” He paused to consider those words. “Maybe she isn’t human.”

“You believe her to be inhuman because of his lack of shame and personal boundaries?” Hannibal questioned at once curious as to how horrid she was in person that Will felt so strongly about her. “Plenty of humans are horrible individuals. Hardly inhuman.”

“No, not fully.” Will corrected, “A halfling however… that is a distinct possibility.” Hannibal glanced at his watch and noted the time.

“I apologize Will but I’m afraid I have an appointment I must keep.”

“A patient?” Will asked, checking his own watch. “It’s late for that don’t you think?”

“Indeed. However, it was requested as an emergency measure.” Hannibal stood. “I’m sorry to cut our time together short.

“No no, it’s fine. I understand.” Will said softly, seemingly to retreat inwards. It was a sad sight to see.

Only after Will had left and he had wiped clean the chair did Hannibal open the door to the waiting room. Inside, stood a small woman with thick curled hair who couldn’t decide if she wanted to fidget with her hair or tug at her skirt like a schoolgirl. It was a disappointing sight to see, given that he had sacrificed time with Will to be presented with what was clearly not an emergency.

“Hi.” She said carefully, turning around to face him quickly.

“Please come in.” Hannibal stated, his curiosity pricked. He had an appointment to meet with Miss Carly, yet Freddie’s Lounds fell into his lap.

“Thank you for seeing me on such short notice.” Freddie faked a shiver. “The only good thing about fall, sweater weather.”

“Emergency’s require swift action.” Hannibal replied, disregarding her last line. Instead he was watching as she scanned the room with inquisitive eyes— eager for a secret to unearth. Despite her clear distraction and obvious penchant for lying she was careful not to turn her back to him. That more than her words caught his attention. Humans, generally speaking, had poor instincts. The instinct to face another individual at all times as an inhuman, born from the need to watch one's own back as no one else would. He tilted his head, before allowing himself to take a deep breath.

There, masked through perfume and the flesh of human lingered a tiny hint of pixie. ‘What a inning boy you are, Will.’ He thought. Hannibal's lips curled briefly before he cleared his throat, intercepting whatever she had been saying.

“Are you Freddie Lounds? This is unethical even for a tabloid journalist.”

“I’m… I'm so embarrassed.”

“I’m going to have to ask for your bag.”

“What?”

“Your bag.” Hannibal repeated, holding out his hand. “I would rather not take it from you.” The pixie blood that ran through the veins began to race, as something buried deep inside her recognized Hannibal for what he was— inhuman. Not that seemed to realize of course blinded by her human half. Still, she could feel the fear pool in her gut and cause her mouth to run dry. She handed over her bag silently and Hannibal deleted the recordings off her tape player himself.

“You have been terribly rude, Miss Lounds.” Hannibal said finally, turning to look at what he imagined to be his next gift to Will. “What’s to be done about that?”

Chapter End Notes

So something I added in a previous chapter: the tunnels running under Baltimore.

Baltimore is an old city, so I imagine in the universe there was an old forgotten and unfinished Tunnel system underneath the city. Hannibal, upon discovering this while modifying his murder basement took advantage of this. He basement now has a direct escape route allowing him to travel across the city undetected. He also uses this to create various hidden stashed or cells and such to keep it separate from his home for security reasons.

Bonfire

“Will you be staying for dinner?” Hannibal asked, as he stood over his mixing bowl.

“Are you inviting me?” Wills voice rasped through the phone pressed between Hannibal's ear and shoulder.

“You are always welcome in my kitchen.”

“If you’re offering, I won’t refuse.” Came Will’s tired voice.

“I’ll see you at 7:30.”

“Can you make it 8:30?” Will asked, “Jacks being a pain with this case. The ripper made his first kill now he thinks every other kill could be the ripper.” Will sighed. “I’m stuck with him until I can get a ride back to Headquarters.”

“A compromise then.” Hannibal said. “I’ll pick you up at 8 o’clock.” Will protested but in the end gratefully accepted Hannibal's offer.

“It’s a date.” Will said with a huff.

When Hannibal was pulled in near the latest crime scene that supposedly belonged to the ripper, he observed the humans before him. It was no in fact a scene of his own making nor was it up to his standards, but he could see some artistry held in the lines of the angel's wings carved from flesh. Will was eager to live however and Hannibal wasn’t able to get a much clearer sight of the scene. Hannibal looked forward to his conversation about it over dinner which was already prepared and set to cool on his counter.

“It smells like a bonfire.” Will said as he walked in through the door, A frown on his face as his eyes flicked about as though searching for a fire.

“Roasted pork in clay.” Hannibal answered. “It traps the flavors from the fire and adds a certain theatricality to dinner.” He adds, slipping free from his coat. “I hope you enjoy it.”

“How could I not, you're the one cooking it.” Will said casually. “Oh. That reminds me. I, uh, felt bad that I haven’t been able to return the favor.” He hesitantly leaves Hannibal, unusually, perplexed.

“Favor?”

“Picking me up, food uh…. Everything.” Will said sheepishly. “So I might have made a stop at the flower shop a couple doors down. Sorry if its squished. I wanted it to be a surprise.” As Will pulled off of his coat, he unveiled a single flower. A Canterbury Bell. Hannibal blinked. “I know it’s just one but I wasn't sure and the lady there wasn’t much help.” Will glanced at the flower still outstretched, “I Thought a single flower would be able to be easily mixed with what you had. But I knows it not a lot and I’m sorry if—“

“It’s lovely.” Hannibal interrupted, quickly reaching to take the flower from Will whose hand had been about to drop in self-doubt. “I have just the place for it. Please, hang your coat and meet me in the dining room.”

“Okay.” Will agreed, still looking nervous as he eyes Hannibal and the flower.

Hannibal paid no mind, instead he turned to searching the depths of the house for a suitable case and settled on a classic piece. ‘It’s unlikely he knows the meaning of this flower.’ Hannibal reminded himself as he attempted to keep his instincts in check, a rare growl-like purr threatening to escape as he set it in his chosen vase. ‘Though Will has surprised me before.’ He thought, deciding to ask during their meal together. Hannibal returned, placing the flower as his centerpiece after putting the previous centerpiece away. A flush spread across Will's checks at the action but Hannibal deftly evaded the beginnings of a protest by asking about the crime scene they had just left. A shadow passed over Will's face transforming into a dark thing and not for the first time Hannibal wondered if Will wasn’t a halfling of some kind, rather than the full human he claimed to be. Hannibal feast on the

perfectly cooked leg of man whilst Will regaled him with the story of men skinned and made angels— the current crime scene.

“It’s not the Ripper.” Will said, finishing his tale.

“No?”

“No. It’s crude and hardly a work of art.”

“The killer made angels of men, is that transformation not art?”

“The killer was rash, castrated himself at the crime scene out of envy. The Ripper left a tongue as a page marker in the Bible he was holding. It’s not the same.” Hannibal took another bite savoring the meat and the thrill Wills words sent down his spine.

“The meaning behind the kills were different.” Will nodded. Hannibal glanced at the flower. “Not unlike the Rippers gift to you.”

“Yeah messages with the flower language. As complex as it gets. Why people every thought that was good thing I wonder even understand.”

“There is a certain poetry to speaking with something fleeting and beautiful. A romance many found appealing.” Hannibal explained. “Many factions of Fae begin courtships with the exchange of flowers and there are some small dryad and nymph families who still practice the old ways communicating almost solely through flora, flowers especially.” Hannibals let his fingers trace along the edges of the flower Will had given him. “Take this flower for instance, what do you suppose it means?”

“Gratitude right?” Will replied and Hannibal let his hand fall away from the flower. “I figured it would be good to say thank you for uh… everything.”

“Indeed.” Hannibal said thinly as he returned to meal hope dashed. It was in fact the most common meaning but the flower held another: *your letter arrived* . It was in fact one of the ways a person could acknowledge another. Some part of Hannibal had been hoping for Will to see him, acknowledge him and his intentions. It seems that not to be. ‘Not yet.’ Hannibal told himself as dinner drew to a close. “It’s late.” He said simply eyeing the darkness outside the window. “I have a guest room, you are welcome to stay the night here.” Hannibal offered.

“I— I don’t have anything to wear.”

“I have plenty you borrow from for the evening. You don’t have classes tomorrow, yes? I can wash your clothes then and take you home.” Will glanced at the cold window and then back at Hannibal.

“My dogs.” Will protested weakly and Hannibal nearly smiled.

“Would the sitter be available to check in on them in the morning?”

“I can find out.” Will said firmly, already pulling his phone out. The sitter happily accepted. After making a point to turn on his security system, Hannibal guided Will upstairs, away from the more public space of his home to his private space. The room next to Hannibals had already been prepared as the wendigo had been hopeful for this result. Dark room was as though an angry storm had colored the walls stunning and wild power with the familiarity of nature Will would find comforting. Wordless awe blankets Will face and Hannibal took a moment to bask in the accomplishment before handing him a drink.

“It's good to have a drink before bed.” He assured Will before drinking his own. “Goodnight dear Will.”

“Hannibal?” Will called out a little breathless as the wendigo had turned to leave.

“Yes?”

“Thank you.” Will said, catching his eyes and keeping them.

“My pleasure.” Hannibal replied with a smile watching as a blush raced down the length of Wills neck and trailed upwards to the tips of ears.

Leaf Piles

Later, when Hannibal had checked on Will he was satisfied to see that the drink had been effective. Will was asleep and would remain so until morning. It was good to see Will getting much needed rest, something he doubted he got much of. Hannibal was glad he made a point of his security system being on. The cameras were all in place, turned on and working. They only caught things outside approaching the house, useless as Hannibal preferred the tunnels but effective for Alibis. Something he intended to use given Will's concern about the Target painted on his back, and the public knowledge of Will's dislike of Freddie Lounds. Will would be safe from any repercussions of Hannibal's next gift, Freddie Lounds herself.

Hannibal enjoyed the prospect of Freddie's demise for more reasons than one. Her halfling pixie heritage would flavor her meat in a delightful way, and he took great pleasure in the fact that Will would be able to enjoy himself more knowing that she was gone and out of the picture in a far more… *permanent* way than the FBI could guarantee. While sad about Wills apparent disinterest The desire to linger and care for him persisted, something rarely if at all present in Wendigos. His new found awareness of his actions and intentions seemed only to intensify the instinct however, and as he looked on at the scene he was about to create with Freddie's body he considered how it had changed him. How Will had changed him. The scent of gasoline filled the air, as though forecasting dread. He looked out at the cold parking lot. A three ringed circle had been created with three flowers: Clematis, *mental beauty* , Tarragons small yellow-white flowers, *lasting interest* and Yellow Pansies, *thinking of you* . Once he had finished making the adjustments he pulled out the matches he had brought with him. He struck it on the side of the box and it lit with ease. Hannibal cast it on Freddie's body and the flames roared, radiating heat and light as it consumed what was left of her. A fitting gift he decided. How many had she burned before Will, it was only fair that she be burned in return. She burned, sacrificial, surrounded by Hannibal's message to Will. As he returned to his home carefully to avoid detection both by others and by his own security system he considered why he might buy more flowers. The onset of fall had left many out of stock with the local florists, and he had difficulties obtaining the ones he wanted in the number he needed. 'A problem for a later date.' He decided as he went to bed eager for the morning to come.

Hannibal awoke to the sound of something being scrapped together. He stood and glanced out the window to see Will had risen before him and was raking up the leaves which had fallen to their color death. They sat in piles of orange red and gold and Hannibal took a moment to enjoy the sight before the sight of a black car interrupted it. Evidently Jack had learned where Will was. Seeing the opportunity, Hannibal undressed. slipping free of his sleep shirt and instead slipping into a blood red silk robe and He smiled to himself for a moment before he fixed his human veil in place. When Hannibal had made it down to greet Jack he looked for all intents and purposes as though he had just woken up.

“Hannibal sorry to—“ Will began as he heard Hannibal exit the house only to stop as he drank in the sight. ‘It would be a lie to say I’m not flattered.’ Hannibal thought, as he felt Wills gaze settle across his shoulders like a familiar weight. Jack simply frowned.

“What’s brought you to my doorstep so early Jack?” Hannibal said, feigning tiredness.

“Crime scene. I’m afraid I’m going to have to take Will.” Hannibal frowned.

“I see. I’ll have to prepare breakfast more quickly than anticipated.” Hannibal said turning to Will and Jack cleared his throat.

“I’m afraid we don’t have time for that doctor.”

“Is Will in danger?” Hannibal asked, already knowing the answer.

“No no, nothing like that doctor.”

“I can’t imagine the FBI needing him for any kind of hostage situation or interview session. I don’t believe he qualifies for that.”

“No but—“

“Ah, perhaps the scene is quickly deteriorating? The usual FBI techniques and staff falling short.” Hannibal nodded as though sad but understanding.

“Not all, FBI is as solid as ever. We have plenty of time with the crime scene.” He assured him and Hannibal wanted to smile as the trap he had laid for Jack snapped shut.

“Pardon me then, but I fail to see why you must take him before he has had breakfast if you have plenty of time with the scene.”

“Of course doctor, your right.” Jack grudgingly admitted grinding his teeth as he spoke. “Still his car is at headquarters so—“

“Of course.” Hannibal acknowledged. “I have already made adjustments to give him a ride to his car. My patients this morning were very understanding. It’s unusually for me to reschedule or cancel appointments.” Left with no option available to him, Jack grumbled quietly to himself. Hannibal could feel the relief radiating off of Will.

“How’d you wake up so easily?” Will asked suddenly as looked at the second story where Hannibal's room was.

“My security system alerted me to an intruder.” Hannibal lied, glancing at Jack who for once appeared apologetic. “I was coming to see if you perhaps caused a false alarm. It wasn't until I reached the door that I realized it was Jack.”

“Apologies doctor lecter. Will I see you soon.” Jack said, suddenly leaving the two to their own devices. Will chuckled.

“I’ve never seen anyone talk to Jack like you do. It’s impressive.” Will said as he followed him inside, where pancakes awaited him.

****

It took more effort than normal to concentrate on his patients that day, as Hannibal knew that elsewhere Will was looking at the gift he had left last night. Time ticked by slowly and distantly Hannibal wondered if Will would even stop by or if he would instead go straight home.

A knock on his door at 7:30 answered that question.

“Hi.” Will said, coming in without waiting to be invited. On anyone else, such rudeness would have appalled Hannibal. Will however… Will makes being rude seem divine rather than a sin. “I wasn’t originally going to stop by but stuff….happened.” Will said finally, taking a seat across from Hannibal.

“Hello Will. What happened?”

“Freddie’s Lounds is dead.”

“I see.”

“Have the bureau thinks I did it.” Will added and Hannibal blinked. “Apparently despite how many people Freddie ***burned*** I’m the go-to suspect. Jack doesn’t think I did it at least.”

“Did you?”

“No.” Will said flatly giving him a look and Hannibal gave a half shrug.

“Many killers confess to a crime in therapy. Doctor-Patient confidentiality. I can only share information if I believe someone to be in danger or they are planning a murder.” Hannibal explained.

“I’m not your patient.”

“No. Your not.” Hannibal replied, tilting his head. “Perhaps we should start by proving your innocence. What time did the murder take place?”

“Last night.” Will answered, with a half smile. “I don’t need to prove my innocence, I have an alibi.” His expression darkened at that.

“They don’t believe your alibi?”

“Not really, no. Not even Alane, thought Jack does, but he was there.”

“I’m your alibi. No has reached out to me in order to confirm this.”

“Yeah. Apparently most of the people find it hard to believe that I spent the night at someone else’s place. So they probably didn’t even bother to check.” The crass way Will said those words, as though he was used to such disregard left an unpleasant feeling in his mouth and made his stomach growl.

“Apologies.” Hannibal said, as the noise seemed to startle Will. “I have an emergency session with a patient which required that I skip lunch today.”

“Oh.” Abruptly Wills face shifted. “And I’m keeping you from dinner now aren’t I?” He ran a hand down his face. “Im sorry I— shouldn’t come. Don’t know what I was thinking—“

“It’s alright.” Hannibal interrupted. “I was a surgeon before, I have gone long hours without eating before. I hardly believe one instance will cause me irreparable harm.” He reassured him. “Now then, it seems that all I need to do is confirm you alini myself, no?”

“Oh. Yeah. But I— sorry but they want proof. Definitive proof.”

“Not an issue. You remember I have a security system in place which videos the surroundings of my house.” Hannibal gave him a half smile of his own but Will didn’t seem to relax. If anything he seemed to only get more tense.

“That’s another thing…” Will said hesitantly. “Jack thinks we’re sleeping together.”

“We did not. You slept in the guest room.” Hannibal answered, enjoying the fact that he had a distinct but unclear accent. Will's face darkened.

“Sex. Jack thinks you and I had sex.” Will said simply, looking vaguely uncomfortable.

“I see.” Hannibal paused. “I apologize for the discomfort that must have caused you.”

“discomfort it caused me?” Will frowned, “no I- I just thought that you should know. I mean what with The Who messed up silk robe and hair-“

“So it didn’t make you uncomfortable?”

“Not…really. I just didn’t want you to feel uncomfortable.” Will answered and now it was Hannibal's turn to be confused.

“I assure it does not phase me to have people think or believe that I had a gentleman caller.” Hannibal said and Will snorted. “And regardless if we did you would hardly be the first.”

“ *Gentleman caller,* who says that and wait— what do you mean?”

“I experimented quite a bit as a young man.” Hannibal said airily. “Paris was a lovely place for the LGBTQ+ community.”

“Oh your gay.” Will said with a blink.

“Pan.” Hannibal corrected, simply. “I would have thought some of the suits I wore were a giveaway.” He smirked and Will let out a loud laugh.

“Oh god they really are aren't they? Some profiler I am.”

“In fairness you had a lot on your mind.”

“It really doesn’t bother you?” Will asked suddenly. “The idea of sleeping with me?” Hannibal briefly considered lying but his need for a reaction, for Will, outweighed his curiosity.

“No.” He answered truthfully. “No it does not.”

“Oh.”

“I’ll send Jack copies of the videos from my security camera.”

“Yeah… uh, thanks.” Will stumbled over his words, the tips of his ears a stunning shade of scarlet.

“How did Freddie die, if you don’t mind my asking.” Hannibal offered, curious about Will reaction but also as a way to redirect the beginnings of embarrassment in the empath.

“Burned.” Will answered, glad for the change of subject.

“Just as she did to countless others.”

“It was almost poetic.” Will agreed. “He also left me flowers in place of organs.”

“So it was a Ripper murder.”

“Yeah. They have someone— Zeller I think— working on translating the flower meanings. I already know what they mean but whatever.”

“What do they mean?”

“Clematis, Tarragon, Yellow Pansies.” Will answered. “ *Your mind is a beauty and I keep you in my thoughts, just as I plan to continue doing.”*

“A confession.”

“A more intentional confession then that last one.” Will agreed.

“You don’t appear to mind.”

“I… don’t. Not really. If the ripper is interested in me, at the very least it means I’m safe.” Will cast him a crooked smile. “I highly doubt the ripper shares will or takes kindly to others touching what was his. He’s killed for less. It’s flattering honestly.” Will glanced at his clocked and sighed. “I have to go. Dogs.” He said. “Would you mind if I came over tomorrow?” He asked hesitantly.”

“I wouldn’t mind, however tomorrow I will be out of town.” Hannibal answered. “I have a meeting I’m afraid I can’t miss.”

“Okay.” Will said, looking somewhat crestfallen. “Sure.”

“Will?”

“Yeah?”

“I’m free the day after tomorrow.”

“I’ll see you then.” Will said with a smile.

The Coven

What Hannibal had said yesterday was true. He did have a meeting and he could not avoid it. With some few nonhumans being able to pass and the humans being woefully ill equipped to handle or even to understand nonhumans, therefore the policing of them came down to nonhumans themselves. And recently a newcomer of some strength had come to settle in the area. It was time then to meet and reconfirm hunting boundaries. The meeting was held at a manor located in the center of the intersection between territories,

The bright sunlight held no effect on Hannibal as he approached the manor, his natural skin (though he liked to think of it as his second skin) acting as an unpierceable void— darker than night itself. The suit he wore over it was another story. As he neared the grand doors, the weight magic seeped from the ground and clawed at his feet for attention. 'It appears the Coven has arrived first.' Hannibal thought ignoring the tugs of magic with a well practiced ease, with exception of his abdomen which seemed heavier though Hannibal ignored it and pushed it to the back of his mind. The doors opened in silent invitation, as the large open was filled with all of the nonhumans in the area who held sanity and the capability for civilization. A low number considering the amount of Non-humans which actually existed. As he stepped inside, the crowd fell to hush and his gaze swept of the crowd. They were unimportant and not who he was meeting today.

"As dramatic as ever." Came a familiar voice came and Hannibal turned to see Bedelia, leaned against the wall watching him. She wore a strapless gown, embroidered in intricate gold filigree, which trailed the floor as she walked over to him.

"Bedelia." Hannibal acknowledged, lifting his arm to guide her down the stairs. As she accepted the arm the room returned to speaking amongst themselves, though quieter than when he had first entered. She ran her hand down Hannibal's arm, admiring the loud patterned suit he wore.

"It suits you almost as well as your person suit."

"One should always have a good tailor on hand." He responded. "Tell me, where is our new neighbor."

“He hasn’t arrived yet.” She answered.

“A shy boy. Unlikely to come out unless prodded.”

“And who will be doing the prodding? You?”

“If need be.” Hannibal responded, pausing his steps to turn and face the elegant witch. “It’s rude to keep people waiting after all.”

“You seem eager to get through this. Is there something else holding your attention?”

“Always.” Hannibal answered curtly.

“I see. Well allow me to…. Relieve some of the pressure. I’ll go make sure he’s here. You enjoy the party.” Hannibal stays silent, eyeing the witch curiously as she departs, gliding through the crowd with the practiced ease of the rich and powerful. Hannibal glanced around eyeing the other guests. They were lesser nonhumans, creatures residing outside humanity’s grace but too weak to be a threat to the major players. More often than not they were made— not born. In the far corner a werepack sat across from another pack, likely discussing the boundaries of their own hunting grounds. Missing livestock always did have a way of drawing attention if the number rose too high. A vampire lay stretched on the sofa to the side enjoying a red wine carefully designed for her own nutritious needs, and she nodded once at Hannibal when she met his gaze. His lips curled into a smile, and he returned the nod. Drifting through the space, the hazy outline of ghost drifted amongst them, content with the familiar buzz of nonhumans that could see and interact with it and didn’t require strenuous work or demands from it— unlike the witches who reside here. A crash from the side of the room had him turning to see a Troll sheepishly attempting to clean the mess he had made. It was a valiant effort for one of his kind. It was in fact commendable that the troll had made it so far. Few trolls had the intelligence required to actually participate in a gathering of this sort. A set of gnome snickered in the back, but halted when Hannibal fixed his gaze upon them. It was a well known fact that Hannibal did not tolerate rudeness. The sound of a throat clearing made him pause, when it came again he turned to see Franklin gazing up at him with puppy eyes. ‘A werewolf without a pack.’ Hannibal noted. ‘Rare. Perhaps this will be an entertaining conversation.’

“Um, hi sir Wendigo.” The rounded werewolf blubbered out and what faint interest Hannibal had dwindled away. “I’m Franklin!” He announced enthusiastically and Hannibal's nose twitched as he picked up on the where’s unusually strong cheese stench.

“Hello.” Hannibal responded blunt, only because of courtesy. Such a thing would have been obvious to anyone, and in fact was clear to almost everyone paying attention to their exchange. Which was most. Franklin however chose to interpret this as an invitation to keep speaking.

“I just came back from the snack bar, the snack are really quiet good. Lovely cheese slices. They have flavors I haven’t even had the chance to try yet. In fact I think it’s been the highlight so far— have you been here before? I’m new. Recently turned. Someone said something about you coming so I thought I should introduce myself— say…. You live in Baltimore don’t you? Yeah your a psychiatrist! I remember looking up your name when— well… back when I was human anyway.” Franklin gushed, barely stopping to breathe for the words pouring from his lips.

“Indeed.” Hannibal said flatly, yet again a warning to cease to speaking which Franklin did not heed.

“Well I think it’s just grand. I mean who would have thought such savage creatures were capable of this. It’s really great to be here and to be something different. I always hated being neurotic and I think doing this— being this way has helped thing. Now I suppose I have to find my pack. Only I haven’t yet. Don’t know how that works and no ones really explained it to me.” Franklin continued to gugh before eyeing him hopefully.

“I’m not a werewolf Franklin, nor am I a savage.” Hannibal warned for the third and last time.

“Oh no I didn’t mean—“ Franklin started to say but Hannibal was done with the conversation and had politely offered the clueless and hopeless wolf a way out three times. ‘Third time's the charm.’ Hannibal thought before he took action. Reaching up and around his snapped the neck of the freshly turned werewolf with a satisfying *crack* . The room fell silent for a moment, thought most were aware of the transgressions and almost none were willing to step forward.

“Would someone be so kind as to alert the coven about the mess. It’s terribly unhygienic to eat off of the floor and I would be loath to eat when many of you are not.” The wendigo offered, spurring the room back into action and lively was.

“You enjoy trouble.” Bedelia says as she appears, walking free of the crowd to meet him, on her arm a tall humanoid.

“Hello, I don’t believe we’re met.” Hannibal offered. “I’m Dr.Hannibal Lecter, Wendigo and owner of Baltimore. I also possess a fair number of the territories surrounding the city which I lease to the lesser creatures.”

“You may call me Francis Dolerhyde.” The man says carefully a slight lisp to his voice.

“And you are?” Bedelia prompted.

“The great red dragon.” He added with a deep growl. “I have traveled far from lands in the east. I seek only the quiet of the forest as I wait.”

“Wait?” Hannibal asked.

“For the woman clothed in the sun.” He answered vaguely, though Hannibal was unsurprised. Dragons were a rather peculiar breed of creature.

“And who might that be?” Bedelia questioned, distracting Hannibal as he sized up the creature before him. Of all the beings in the room at the moment there were only two of any sort of influence, Bedelia and this dragon. Of those two only one had the power to challenge Hannibal to a fight and hope to win. The wendigo straightened his back, instincts already blazing on high alert. ‘One dragon is a challenge, two is a problem.’ Hannibal thought before answering the question for Francis.

“His mate to be.” catching the Dragon's attention. “Though she may not know it yet.” The red dragon tilted his head, let his eyes blink to his second sight— his dragon vision and inhaled

deeply.

“Correct.” Francis answered slowly, his voice rasping as though the very words were difficult to say, and perhaps they were for a dragon. “I apologize that my *coming here* has disturbed you during such a… sensitive time, Dr.Lecter.” He continued. “I assure you I am here only to wait for my prophesied one to appear. I shall not harm you and yours during my vigil.” The words sent a shockwave through the crowd and even Bedelia looked off kilter. Abruptly Hannibal was faced with what he had earlier tried to ignore, what he tried to slow and dely…. Hannibal's instincts had not waited for courting to be over but instead chose to skip steps and dive into breeding mode.

Ancient Garden

Chapter Notes

So for the purposes of this fic, Wendigos can be born/hatched from eggs.

Please excuse the unusual egg-laying method, it’s a fantasy creature and I’m making up the rules for it as I go.

See the end of the chapter for more notes

“How did you know?” Hannibal asked, curious.

“We are both oviparous creatures, although your kind ignores gender lines. It was simply a matter of smelling it. You must be very unhappy you attended such an event without them given the stage of development.” It was the most Hannibal had heard him say and he had a feeling that would remain so for a ***long*** time. “I remember my mother being a similar way before laying her eggs. Your mate must be pleased.”

“I am an ovuliparity species, not oviparity.” Hannibal said, in a non-answer, not eager for anyone to know about Will. The idea of a Francis frowned and Bedelia know was even less appealing. The platinum blonde witch stepped in, with a curious gleam in her eye. She was always eager for more information on Hannibal's species as almost none of his kind held enough sentience or wherewithal to share such knowledge about themselves. Shrouded in darkness I’m and secrecy was the nature of the wendigo.

“Oviparous creatures…. Creatures who lay eggs.” She said thoughtfully. “Your eggs will never hatch.” She added with a smirk. “Although It's fascinating that Wendigos are an egg laying species. Who would have thought. I always assumed Wendigos were made, not born.” She spoke as she prodded for more information. “Tell me, do you plan on eating it?” Hannibal stiffened at the question.

“All Wendiego eggs first have to avoid being eaten by their wendigo parents.” Francis recoiled from that particular factoid. It was not a natural instinct in dragons to eat one's young, unborn or otherwise.

“Well…” Bedelia said unsure how to handle that piece of information, “I suppose Francis has answered the question that we gathered here to answer. The territory boundaries remain unchanged.”

“With the exception of my outermost territory. He may use that during his stay however,” Hannibal warned. “Any hunting outside of the outermost territory must be done elsewhere. Hunting in the other regions of my territory will not be tolerated.” Francis simply nodded.

“Its settled. Come let’s enjoy this party.” Bedelia encouraged, and Francis promptly turned to leave.

“He left without saying goodbye.” Hannibal noted, and the witch merely rolled her eyes.

“And what’s to be done about that?”

“Whenever possible, one should always eat the rude.”

****

After an evening of socialization and imprinting the fear of himself onto the brains lesser beings, Hannibal returned home and began his nightly routine. While it was true ovuliparity species the finer details were far more…. Inhuman in nature. It was clear the his judgement was already impaired if it took a dragon pointing it out to him. Hannibal paused in his nightly routine— Francis had smelled it on him. The wendigo closed his eyes and held his write to his nose, carefully scenting himself.

There.

Francis had a keen sense of smell, or it was possible his own sense of smell was being altered by the changes his body was undergoing. Regardless he was further along than he had expected, and he was still lacking in information. He stood at the foot of his inviting and luxurious bed, nightly routine finished and dressed only in his pajama pants with the knowledge that the clock was ticking down until a decision would be made for him about the

future of his eggs and of himself. He would have to choose now, at the moment if he wanted to pursue a future with Will, If he wanted to give him a family, a child. Perhaps, if they were fortunate enough, a daughter. Hannibal recalled a previous case, one of the first they had worked together one. The Minnesota shrike. A deranged and ill human who had become fixated on the inhuman community, with the hopes of joining it. He recalled the longing that colored Wills lovely blue eyes and the loss the drowned him when he held Abigails dead body on the floor of her fathers kitchen, knowing he had failed to save her. “What sort of father would be?” Hannibal wondered, thoughtfully of course he knew how Will would answer. “You’d be a good father.” He stated with finality and the word sent a chill in the air as the decision crashed down into the reality and seeped into every pore of Hannibal's human veil. Hannibal knelt to the floor of the bedroom, and let his second skin— his true skin emerge free and rich. A voided blackink stretching where his human skin usually appeared, and he let his eyes fall shut. It was time to make a journey into the shadowed realm of the mind. A unique trait among Wendigos, and far more than a simply mnemonic system as thought by humans. It allowed for a more complete separation from mind and body. A wendigo could nearly live there if they so choose, safe for taking care of the bodily necessities every so often. Hannibal's was vast, even of course by medieval standards. It would be an endeavor in order to reach what he needed to reach.

Hannibal gazed at the imposing Castle doors before him, undaunted as he pushed open the doors and entered, his heavy footsteps echoed off the marvel into the vaulted ceilings above. His antlers curled and tangled as he moved silently deeper. A thousand rooms, miles of corridors, hundreds of facts attached to each object furnishing each room sprawled forward emerging from the shadows as being molded from the void itself by his hand, and perhaps it was. Hannibal was an artist and romantic at heart, he had never held the taste for science, to see if the mind palace existed rather as a plane of reality instead of a pocket dimension which a Wendigo would slip into as easily as sinking away in the shadows. Hannibal winds around to the right, past a bust of Pliny and up the staircase beyond the Hall of Addresses— a room lined with statuary and paintings in a fixed order which were well lit, as Cicero recommends. Still, he continued to walk the corridors of his mind palace, vast in its severe timeless weight. The third alcove from the door on the right is dominated by a painting of St. Francis feeding a moth to a starling. On the floor before the painting is this tableau, life-sized in painted marble. The marble under his feet took on the rich golds and reds as the vaulted ceiling arched and twisted themselves into a chapel. The corridor flattening to an aisle as empty pews marked his passing. A skull graven on the floor held its hands in supplication, and Hannibal looked up at the altar before it.

Will, in his glory and unpredictability was fresco upon the wall.

In the center an image of Will’s face gazed at him, unforgiving, a red heart spilling gold as dazzled gold antlers grew from the cracks it sprouted. To his left, a version of Will stood with eyes close, head tilted back ever so slightly as though unaware of being watched and at peace

with himself and his surroundings. At Wills right however, the wrath of the lamb burned in his blue eyes— like storms out at sea. Powerful, unpredictable and terrific. Further left, Will stared at some distinct unseen thing. Out of reach and untouchable, whilst the far right held Will in his face of joy. Looking out as though captivated. Hannibal gazed at the altar, the many faces of Will Graham displayed like one of the old gods and as fickle as them as well. Briefly, Hannibal hesitated as his eyes fixed themselves on the righteous fury on one of Will's many faces.

“There are means of influence other than violence.” A familiar voice came from behind him. A memory tied to the place as a warning as much as a guide. Chiyoh sighed as he turned to look at her. “But violence is what you understand.” Chiyoh stood in her long dark coat, hair pulled back and looking nothing like the young girl she once was. She wasn't a wendigo or even real. Chiyoh existed here as a figment of Hannibal's mind palace carefully constructed to house things he wanted to remember— and lock up things he didn’t.

“Chiyoh.” Hannibal said quietly, watching her turn to walk her own path amongst the pews, a spectre of times gone by. “Where will you go?”

“I have nowhere to go. You saw to that.” She replied, his figure wavering like smoke before him. “But your not here out of concern for me.”

“No.”

“Why are you here Hannibal,” She asked softly, “when you know there are places here you cannot safely go.”

“I’m here for Will.” He answered, and she tilted her head.

“You hunger for him.”

“Yes.”

“It would be more honest if you simply ate him. But you won’t.” She said with a smile as she stepped forward and pressed her hand against his stomach. Wendigo’s were known for the bony figure, their perpetual state of starvation. Hannibal however was slowly filling out, a gravid weight which steadily grew. “You already know where you need to go. Go quickly, some beasts shouldn’t be caged.” She warned before she left him. The memory melted way back to where it was hidden, and to his left was a garden gate. Where the deeper depths of the catacombs would be there were hints of green, sickly and blue as he taunted him into the depths. Down in the deep Hannibal walked, until he came at last upon an Ancient Garden, not unlike the one at Castle Lecter had been in his boyhood. A moonless night had fallen over the garden, which was lit only by the fireflies which hung about the air eating the snail that clung to the fountain. The fountain took up much of the space, situated in the center with blood red wine seeping out. A singular bloody handprint decorated it. Sitting next to it, and staring down with a blank sort of stare sat Simonetta— Hannibal's mother.

“You’ve grown.” She said simply, turning to look at him as she shed her own human veil. Her dark coloration mirrored his, as she sat, claws tracing the tiny handprint. The only mark from her only daughter of what was her only clutch.

“You haven’t.”

“Memories only change if the person remembering it changes it themselves.”

“And have you?”

“Yes. I’ve changed. You changed me.”

“I changed your setting and peeled back that human veil you wore. Now you are who you were meant to be, as nature intended.”

“Indeed.” She said quietly looking back down at the fountain. “I was never happier than in the garden with—“ sounds distorted and the garden itself seemed to warp for a moment, hiding the name from his ears as his mother twisted and double backed on herself. “Even now you want to hear nothing of her. Restricted us, me— to a handprint.” Hannibal stayed silent. “Why are you here?” She asked finally.

“You know why.”

“Just eat it. Save yourself the trouble.” She scoff, with a glance at his abdomen.

“I would prefer not to.” That caught her attention, and Hannibal forced himself to remain still under her sharp and pointed gaze.

“It takes two to tango.” She warned and Hannibal nodded. She paused, thinking before she crossed one dark leg over the other, claws lacing together like a parody of a caring 1940’s mother. “Wendigo gestational periods are quick. Often it slips by unnoticed— until it’s too late.” Hannibal nodded his agreement as she continued. “Laying them is excruciating but it is also important. You must maintain focus, whomever you choose as a mate must be able to care for them. If you lose control during the birthing process you lose control of the shape of the eggs.” She smiled softly. “When I laid you, I nearly failed. I lost control and you came out as something resembling a kitten. Your father was quite distraught. He never did like cats. I had a bit more practice with your si— the other egg, it came out as a ring. Easy to carry with, and doesn’t draw attention.” Simonette tilted her head, “honestly the idea of eggs is misleading. They still need to be fertilized before they change shape into eggs. Then, after a time a wendigo Will hatch, chewing it’s way out of the shell, all teeth and beautifully vicious.”

“How does the fertilization process work?” Hannibal asked hesitantly, as the insecurity behind the question stabbed at him.

“Love.” She answered.

“That is not an answer.”

“Wendigos are creatures of hunger and darkness. They can only be born from things as equally passionate. Hatred will suffice but oftentimes it will cost you your eggs as they will choose to shatter them. Your mate must adore you, love you unconditionally. They will feed those feelings to the egg, providing the energy needed to grow and develop.”

“How does one feed such emotions to them?”

“That’s the joy, there is not set way. Your father chose to read his favorite books to you, but he sang and danced with my other egg.” She shrugged. “It is a strange way, but Wendigos are by and large strange creatures even amongst other non-humans.”

“Thank you mother.” Hannibal said, seeing that we would get no more clear answered from her. She laughed.

“Oh my dear boy, I can only give you information that you already possess. I am nothing more than a memory, remember.”

“Even memories have power.” He said simply, before turning to leave the ancient garden behind.

Chapter End Notes

Recap over egg-laying for Wendigos:

If a wendigo feel sufficiently attracted to another individual (regardless of species) they can become gravid (develop an egg).

They lay this “egg” which can actually appear as almost anything and then must present it to their mate/partner/person they are attracted to. Said individual must love the wendigo enough to somehow manifest and feed those emotions to the “egg” which once it’s received enough becomes fertilized.

A fertilized “egg” then takes on an egg appearance until it hatches, which happens when a baby wendigo eats it shell.

Please drop by the Archive and comment to let the creator know if you enjoyed their work!